



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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December 15, 2004

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Candi Wines, SBOH Staff
RE: **HEALTH WORKFORCE DIVERSITY NETWORK UPDATE**

Summary

Health disparities have been priority issues for the Washington State Board of Health for several years. The Board has chosen to focus its efforts on health care workforce diversity. The *Final Report on Health Disparities* (adopted May 2001) demonstrated that people of color are underrepresented in our state's health care workforce and underserved by its health care system. The report identified multiple opportunities to build a more diverse health care delivery system. The Health Workforce Diversity Network (HWDN) was established in response to one of the report's recommendations.

HWDN conducted a statewide survey to identify and characterize programs that recruit and prepare people for health careers. Judith Huntington, Executive Director of the Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA), Dr. Charles Weatherby, a Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) representative, and Kimberly Moore, HWDN Coordinator, will present information to the Board today about preliminary results from this survey and how the results will be used by HWDN.

HWDN is also interested in hearing suggestions from the Board about the Network's future work, and in discussing its continuing relationship with the Board. Although HWDN formed at the urging of the Board and was initially staffed by the Board, the current work plan envisioned that staff work on health disparities would continue only through July 2003. Ms. Moore currently staffs the network on a volunteer basis and WSNA and WSMA are the conveners.

We have also invited Heather Stephen-Selby, Dean of the Allied Health Program at Renton Technical College, to provide an example of an integrated career development program that is expected to increase diversity within the nursing profession in Washington.

Recommended Board Action

None.

Background

The Health Workforce Diversity Network is a broad-based public/private group that includes representatives from associations of public health professionals, hospitals, community clinics, higher education, and public health officials. In March 2004, the Board heard from HWDN about its plans to conduct a Health Career Pathway Survey. The survey was designed to identify successful programs or models at early education, middle and high school, and higher education institutions. It also sought to identify specific components of these programs that make them successful. A primary goal of the survey was to identify gaps in health career pathways by region. Another goal was to facilitate communication among health career programs, to exchange best practices, and improve articulation between programs. The results of the survey will be used to focus efforts on filling existing gaps and promoting best practices.